# UK government announces NHS waiting list improvements and new cancer vaccine initiative



The UK government has announced an update on NHS waiting lists, revealing a continuous improvement as the number of patients awaiting treatment has decreased for the sixth consecutive month as of February, according to data released by NHS England on April 10. This update comes alongside the introduction of a new initiative to fast-track certain patients, as part of Labour's Plan for Change, which outlines ambitious healthcare reform milestones for the next five years.

The plan seeks to address hospital backlogs by ensuring that 92% of patients are seen within 18 weeks from their referral for treatment. In line with this effort, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer shared on X (formerly Twitter) that patients diagnosed with advanced skin cancer will be prioritised for trials of an innovative cancer vaccine.

The vaccine, known as iSCIB1+ (ImmunoBody), is designed to enhance the immune system’s ability to recognise and combat cancer cells, thereby improving the efficacy of immunotherapy treatments. The administration of the vaccine is structured over a period of up to two years, and it aims to bring new, potentially life-saving treatments to patients within the NHS.

This initiative is part of NHS England’s Cancer Vaccine Launch Pad (CVLP), which has already provided thousands of patients with better access to personalised vaccines, particularly for bowel cancer. The programme's goal is to offer tailored cancer treatments to up to 10,000 patients in England by the year 2030. Faster recruitment for the trials and a broader rollout across more NHS hospitals is expected to yield quicker results.

Patients will receive the iSCIB1+ vaccine via needle-free injection into the skin or muscle. The NHS has partnered with Scancell, a UK-based life sciences company, to facilitate this initiative, with the first patient referrals anticipated to begin next month.

Professor Peter Johnson, the NHS national cancer director, emphasised the potential impact of cancer vaccines on patient care, stating, “Skin cancer can have a devastating impact and we know that cancer vaccines have the potential to revolutionise cancer care for patients in this country and across the world – and to save more lives.” He further expressed excitement about the expansion of the NHS's world-leading programme, indicating that it will allow more patients facing different types of cancer to benefit from emerging vaccines.

Dr. Nermeen Varawalla, chief medical officer at Scancell, highlighted the transformative potential of cancer vaccines in immunotherapy. She noted, “Recent clinical data has demonstrated that our potent, tumour-targeted ‘off-the-shelf’ cancer vaccine delivers strong efficacy, with the potential for meaningful long-term survival benefits in patients with advanced metastatic melanoma.” Dr. Varawalla affirmed that the partnership with the CVLP is a significant step towards accelerating the clinical development of this groundbreaking treatment.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/monthly-operational-statistics-february-2025/> - This URL supports the ongoing improvement in NHS waiting lists, noting the reduction in long waits and the continuous decrease in the waiting list size over the past months.
* <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/04/Feb25-RTT-SPN-Publication-PDF-386K-76538.pdf> - This document provides specific statistics on the referral to treatment (RTT) pathways, including the number of patients waiting for treatment at the end of February 2025, and the median waiting times.
* <https://healthcareandprotection.com/nhs-waiting-lists-drops-to-7-4m-as-slow-recovery-continues/> - This article discusses the decline in NHS waiting lists, noting the current number of patients and the efforts to address the backlog, highlighting the challenges faced by the NHS in meeting targets.
* <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/pressures/nhs-backlog-data-analysis> - This analysis provides insight into the NHS backlog, discussing the factors contributing to the waiting lists, including workforce shortages and the impact of COVID-19 on healthcare services.
* <https://www.covermagazine.co.uk/news/4412162/nhs-waiting-list-continues-decline> - This news article further corroborates the decline in the NHS waiting list, highlighting the ongoing efforts to improve waiting times and address healthcare challenges.